NUMB. XV.

The GUARDIAN.

——————sibi quivis
Speret idem, ſudet multùm, fruſtràque laboret,
Auſus idem—————— Hor.

Saturday, March 28. 1713.

I Came yeſterday into the Parlour, where I found Mrs *Cornelia*, my Lady's third Daughter, all alone, reading a Paper, which, as afterwards found, contained a Copy of Verſes upon Love and Friendſhip. She, I believe, apprehended that I had glanced my Eye upon the Paper, and by the Order and Diſpoſition of the Lines might diſtinguiſh that they were Poetry; and therefore, with an innocent Confuſion in her Face, ſhe told me I might read them if I pleaſed, and ſo withdrew. By the Hand, at firſt ſight, I could not gueſs whether they came from a Beau or a Lady; but having put on my Spectacles, and peruſed them carefully, I found by ſome peculiar Modes in Spelling, and a certain Negligence in Grammar, that it was a Female Sonnet. I have ſince learned, that ſhe hath a Correſpondent in the Country who is as bookiſh as herſelf; that they write to one another by the Names of *Aſtrea* and *Dorinda*, and are mightily admired for their eaſie Lines. As I ſhould be loath to have a Poeteſs in our Family, and yet am unwilling harſhly to croſs the Bent of a young Lady's Genius, I choſe rather to throw together ſome Thoughts upon that kind of Poetry which is diſtinguiſhed by the Name of *Eaſie*, than to riſque the Fame of Mrs. *Cornelia*'s Friend, by expoſing her Work to publick View.

I have ſaid, in a foregoing Paper, that every Thought which is agreeable to Nature, and expreſſed in a Language ſuitable to it, is written with Eaſe; which I offered in anſwer to thoſe who ask for Eaſe in all Kinds of Poetry; and it is ſo far true, as it ſtates the Notion of eaſie Writing in general, as that is oppoſed to what is forced or affected. But as there is an eaſie Mein, an eaſie Dreſs, peculiarly ſo called; ſo there is an eaſie ſort of Poetry. In order to write eaſily, it is neceſſary, in the firſt place, to think eaſily. Now, according to different Subjects, Men think differently; Anger, Fury, and the rough Paſſions, awaken ſtrong Thoughts: Glory, Grandeur, Power, raiſe great Thoughts: Love, Melancholy, Solitude, and whatever gently touches the Soul, inſpires eaſie Thoughts.

Of the Thoughts ſuggeſted by theſe gentle Subjects, there are ſome which may be ſet off by Style and Ornament: Others there are, which the more ſimply they are conceived, and the more clearly they are expreſſed, give the Soul proportionably the more pleaſing Emotions. The Figures of Stile added to them ſerve only to hide a Beauty, however gracefully they are put on, and are thrown away like Paint upon a fine Complexion. But here not only Livelineſs of Fancy is requiſite to exhibit a great variety of Images; but alſo of Niceneſs of Judgment to cull out thoſe, which, without the Advantage of Foreign Art, will ſhine by their own intrinſick Beauty. By theſe means, whatſoever ſeems to demand Labour being rejected, that only which appears to be eaſie and natural will come in; and ſo Art will be hid by Art, which is the Perfection of eaſie Writing.

I will ſuppoſe an Author to be really poſſeſſed with the Paſſion which he writes upon, and then we ſhall ſee how he would acquit himſelf. This I take to be

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be the ſafeſt way to form a Judgment of him; ſince if he be not truly moved, he muſt at leaſt work up his Imagination as near as poſſible to reſemble Reality. I chooſe to inſtance in Love, which is obſerved to have produced the moſt finiſhed Performances in this Kind. A Lover will be full of Sincerity, that he may be believed by his Miſtreſs; he will therefore think ſimply, he will expreſs himſelf perſpicuouſly, that he may not perplex her; he will therefore write unaffectedly. Deep Reflections are made by an Head undiſturbed; and Points of Wit and Fancy are the Work of an Heart at Eaſe: Theſe two Dangers then, into which Poets are apt to run, are effectually removed out of the Lover's way. The ſelecting proper Circumſtances, and placing them in agreeable Lights, are the fineſt Secrets of all Poetry; but the Recollection of little Circumſtances is the Lover's ſole Meditation, and relating them pleaſingly the Buſineſs of his Life. Accordingly we find that the moſt celebrated Authors of this Rank excel in Love-Verſes. Out of ten thouſand Inſtances I ſhall name one, which I think the moſt delicate and tender I ever ſaw.

To my ſelf I ſigh often, without knowing why;
And when abſent from Phyllis, *methinks I could die.*

A Man who hath ever been in Love will be touched at the reading of theſe Lines; and every one, who now feels that Paſſion, actually feels that they are true.

From what I have advanced it appears, how difficult it is to write eaſily. But when eaſie Writings fall into the Hands of an ordinary Reader, they appear to him ſo natural and unlaboured, that he immediately reſolves to write, and fancies that all he hath to do is to take no Pains. Thus he thinks indeed ſimply, but the Thoughts, not being choſen with Judgment, are not beautiful; he, it is true, expreſſes himſelf plainly, but flatly withal. Again, if a Man of Vivacity takes it in his Head to write in this Way, what Self-denial muſt he undergo, when bright Points of Wit occur to his Fancy? How difficult will he find it to reject florid Phraſes, and pretty Embelliſhments of Stile? So true it is, that Simplicity of all things is the hardeſt to be copied, and Eaſe to be acquired with the greateſt Labour. Our Family knows very well how ill Lady *Flame* looked, when ſhe imitated Mrs. *Jane* in a plain Black Suit. And, I remember, when *Frank Courtly* was ſaying the other Day, that any Man might write eaſie, I only ask'd him, If he thought it poſſible that Squire *Hawthorn* ſhould ever come into a Room as he did? He made me a very handſome Bow, and anſwered with a Smile, *Mr.* IRONSIDE, *you have convinced me.*

I ſhall conclude this Paper, by obſerving that *Paſtoral* Poetry, which is the moſt conſiderable Kind of eaſie Writing, hath the oftenеſt been attempted with ill Succeſs of any ſort whatſoever. I ſhall therefore, in a little time, communicate my Thoughts upon that Subject to the Publick.

This Paper is to be had of Mr. Yemes *under the* Thatch'd-houſe *Tavern in St.* James's-ſtreet; *Mrs.* Bond *at* Charing-croſs; *Mrs.* Bolter *near the* Temple-gate; *and Mr.* Round *in* Exchange-Ally.

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